

Encouraging joint engagement

What is joint engagement?

Joint engagement happens when you and your child are paying attention to the same object or event during a back and forth interaction. This might happen as you laugh together while watching monkeys at the zoo, or when you're having fun pushing cars down a ramp. Whatever it is you're doing, you're both aware that you're sharing an interest in the same thing.

Why is joint engagement important?

Joint engagement makes learning easier for your child. When you're focused on the same thing, your child can pay more attention to the things you say and do, which helps them learn new words.



Joint engagement also helps your child learn how to:

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| ✓ communicate back and forth | ✓ use gestures |
| ✓ imitate others | ✓ play in new ways |

How to encourage joint engagement

Here are five things you can do to encourage joint engagement and create opportunities for your child to learn:

1

Observe your child

Pay close attention to see what your child is interested in. This way, you can focus your attention on the same thing to show them you're sharing their interest.

2

Join in

- Get down to your child's level so they can see your face and gestures better.
- Find a way to join in playfully with what they're doing – If they're jumping or clapping, join in the fun. If they're building with blocks, start building something of your own.
- Get your own toy – it's important not to take your child's toy away from them, so make sure you have your own toy or set of toys to join in with.

3

Imitate your child's actions

- If you're not sure how to join in with your child, a good idea is to copy whatever they're saying or doing. This is sure to get their attention!
- Take turns – keep copying your child, taking turns back and forth together as a way to keep the interaction going.

4

Keep following your child's lead

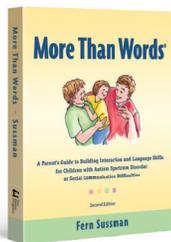
- Encourage your child to take a turn by pausing and waiting after you've joined in. When you wait expectantly, you send your child a message that it's their turn to say or do something.
- Respond right away to whatever your child says or does.



5

Have fun!

When you join in playfully, it's more likely that your child will enjoy themselves and want to keep the interaction going, creating more opportunities for joint engagement and learning.



These ideas are from the Hanen More Than Words® guidebook for parents of children on the autism spectrum or who have social communication difficulties.

Learn more at www.hanen.org/MTWguidebook

About The Hanen Centre

The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit organization committed to promoting the best possible language, literacy and social skills in young children. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those on the autism spectrum and those who are developing typically. For more information, visit www.hanen.org.

